Reading Jane Austen through an Epic Lens: *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* (The Pursuit of Kleos in a Feminine Sphere)

Honors Research Thesis

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for graduation
"with Honors Research Distinction in Classics and English" in the undergraduate colleges of The Ohio State University

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November 2012

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Introduction to the Epic Hero

When beginning a discussion on heroism, it is first necessary to define what it is to be a hero. A hero is someone exemplary, who excels above the rest of his or her peers in courage, virtue, character, and honor. The hero's life is based on the achievement of a goal—the culmination of all heroic efforts. This goal-oriented life is best evidenced in the heroes of epic. In epic, the goal which all heroes strive for is the achievement of *kleos*. This Greek term, *kleos*, can be defined simply as "glory," yet it means so much more to the epic hero. *Kleos* is *everlasting glory* or "the fame beyond even death that accrues to a hero because of his heroic feats" (Toohey 6). For the epic hero, the only way to gain *kleos* is by fighting—and most likely dying—in battle. Homer's Odysseus (*Odyssey*) and Achilles (*Iliad*) epitomize the epic hero. These warriors, throughout their individual epic stories, undergo a journey in the pursuit of *kleos*, transforming themselves into the foremost Greeks both in battle and intelligence. However, it is important to note that the "battlefield is inhabited solely by men" and, thereby, marks heroism as a "superbly masculine role" (Redfield 119). Thus, as an epic hero is the most heroic of his sex, he comes to embody masculinity through his performance in the masculine sphere of war and battle.

Just as Odysseus and Achilles epitomize heroism, Jane Austen's heroines, Elizabeth Bennet and Emma Woodhouse—from *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, respectively—are the quintessential heroines. They, like epic heroes, rise above others of their sex in virtue, intelligence, character, and honor. However, as they are not men, they cannot win their *kleos* on the battlefield. This being the case, in order to evaluate Jane Austen's heroines we must look at how they relate to their own feminine sphere. In this paper, I will argue that Jane Austen's novels are "female epics" in the sense that they allow the heroine to achieve her *kleos* through

the feminine sphere, by making a good marriage—the only way that the majority of women could make a name for themselves. In the discussion of this topic, I will be looking at thematic correlations between *Pride and Prejudice* in connection with the *Odyssey*, and *Emma* in connection with the *Iliad*, while also considering the implications of genre differences between epic and the novel, societal differences between Homeric Greece and late eighteenth/early nineteenth century England, and gender differences in regards to their effects on heroism.

Why Draw Comparisons between Austen and Epic?

It may seem like a fairly broad stretch to draw connections between Jane Austen's novels and the epics of Homeric tradition; however, there are two points on which this comparison may be grounded. The first point of comparison is that the novel as a genre is a "modern inheritant" of epic (Toohey 223). While Homer's epics adhere stringently to the topical form of epic, later in Greek history the genre underwent a period of experimentation in which writers introduced a variety of "non-epic" characteristics into the form. As an example of this phenomenon, Toohey cites how Apollonius introduced "romance, the sentimental, the erotic, travel, scientific and didactic lore, humor, a sharp juxtaposition of the heroic and the 'bourgeouis'" into his epic (228). Notably, all of these aspects are found in the modern novel of Austen's time, and in her works themselves. Later epics began "like the modern novel" to have "promiscuous" affiliations with genre, whereas in the early tradition the content of epic was singular (Toohey 228). Furthermore, "Epic works such as the *Argonautica* of Apollonius, the *Dionysiaca* of Nonnus, and…the *Metamorphoses* of Ovid, seem to exist on the interface between traditional epic and what we consider as the modern novel" (Toohey 228-9). These works represent a period of transformation in which the epic form was becoming novelized.

Aiding the transformation of epic, the modern day novel took on aspects of other genres. According to Bakhtin, the modern day novel "incorporates others [genres] into its own peculiar structure, reformulating and re-accentuating them," adding that the epic is one of these genres (5). The novelization of the epic can be traced to the period of Hellenism as "closer contact with the heroes of the Trojan epic cycle began to be felt" and, thereby, the epic begins, in Bakhtin's words, to be "transformed into novel" (15). He finds that this familiarity with the characters of epic is why "epic material is transposed into novelistic material" (15). Once the reader begins to feel familiar with the content of epic, "the subject of serious literary representation…is portrayed without any distance, on the level of contemporary reality…it is precisely laughter that destroys the epic, and in general destroys any hierarchical [distance]" (Bakhtin 22-3). He concludes, by finding that in the destruction of this epic distance, the novel was able to take shape (Bakhtin 39). Put simply, "in terms of generic evolution," modern novels are "descendants of the ancient epic" (Toohey 229).

The second point which allows the correlation between Jane Austen and epic to be formed lies in that Austen was likely familiar with the classics, such as epic. As Deforest argues, it is probable that Austen's father "who knew classical literature thoroughly, and who taught Latin to students both inside and outside his family, would have taught her a language that we know he passionately valued" (Deforest 11-21). While it was not normal for a woman in Austen's time to have a classical education, "Jane Austen, whose father admired her work, would have certainly received instruction had she desired it" (Deforest 11-21). Evidence that Jane Austen was taught Latin lies in her inscription of "*ex dono mei patris*" on a piece of her juvenilia written in a notebook given to her by her father, which in Latin translates as "a gift of my father" (Deforest 11-21). Her use of the Latin phrase cleverly applies to both her father's gift

of the notebook, as well as her ability to write in Latin. As Deforest states, "Her father gave her both the actual book of paper and the education itself—the physical and intellectual requisites for a writer" (Deforest 11-21). Her father's aid in her education was furthered by her free access to his library, which had 500 books by 1801, and as her father himself was so adamant on the importance of the classics, it is very likely that Homer's epics were among his collection for her perusal (Pemberley). However, as a woman author, Jane Austen was not able to admit to her classical education publicly for "learned women were treated with hostility" and, further, "to emphasize classical literature meant losing female readers" (Deforest 98). By contrast, "to ignore classical literature meant losing half the literary tradition" (Deforest 98). By her frequent use of classical references, we can deduce that Austen did not ignore classical literature, but instead chose not to publicize the fact that she possessed such knowledge.

In her correspondence to Mr. Clarke, the Librarian of the Prince Regent, she on multiple occasions uses "a classical form in which to cast her implied assertion that she lacks a classical education" (Deforest 11-21). At his suggestion to write a history upon the marriage of Princess Charlotte, she responds that she could "no more write a romance than an epic poem" (Pemberley). In her assertion, Austen implies that she knows the form of epic poetry, just as she knows romantic form. In another letter, she writes, "A classical education, or at any rate a very extensive acquaintance with English literature, ancient and modern, appears to me quite indispensable for the person who would do any justice to your clergyman; and I think I may boast myself to be, with all possible vanity, the most unlearned and uninformed female who ever dared to be an authoress" (Deforest 11-21). In this statement, Jane Austen ironically purports to be "unlearned" and "uninformed," which with her extensive reading, clearly, seems not to be the case. Thus, it can be said that she ironically suggests she does not possess a classical education.

Deforest posits that "she does not explicitly deny that she knows classical literature" (Deforest 11-21). Adding to the likelihood of Austen's classical education, "whether she read classics in the original or in translation," writes Deforest, "she was comfortable with obscure figures of classical antiquity, Agricola, Caractacus, Severus, and Lucina" (Deforest 11-21). Further, in a letter to her sister Cassandra, Austen writes that a few verses of poetry she had written "seemed to me purely classical—just like Homer and Virgil…" (Deforest 11-21). In this statement, she demonstrates that she has a knowledge of the two foremost classical writers of epic—Homer (Greek epic tradition) and Virgil (Roman epic tradition). In sum, whereas Austen "only rarely alluded to classical literature," her use of these forms, in Deforest's words, "is artistry, not ignorance" (Deforest 98). Although she did not highly publicize her classical education, there is enough evidence to show that she had an understanding of classical literature. With this link between Austen and the classics in mind, this paper will explore what observations can be made in looking at the heroines of Jane Austen in the perspective of epic heroes.

Cultural Differences between Homeric Greece and Austen's England

Before we can begin the discussion of the works themselves, we must first take a look at the cultures which Homer's poems and Austen's novels depict—as well as, in Homer's case, the society from which his poems emerged—in order to form a basis of comparison. It is no secret that Homer's and Austen's audiences held vastly different views on how a society functioned. However, with Homer, the topic of culture becomes further complicated by the fact that Homer is writing about a society that is not his own. Homer composed his epics at the end of the Greek Dark Age, approximately 8th century B.C. (Murnaghan xlix). In contrast, the events of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are set around 400 years earlier during the time of the Bronze Age, or the

Mycenaean period (Murnaghan l; Finley 19). The two societies, while holding some similarities, are ultimately so different from one another that it is necessary to discuss the two separately.

The Mycenaean period is significant because it details the age of heroes. Finley states, "That there had once been a time of heroes few Greeks, early or late, ever doubted" (18). Thus, it was an accepted part of Greek culture that these heroes—these men who traced their lineage back to the gods—were part of their history. The Bronze Age, the first stage of ancient Greek history, was the allotted time in which these heroes lived (Murnaghan l). For the Greeks, heroism was a part of their literary past as well as a lived experience that was evident in their history. The Greek nation, during this time, was divided into a set of distinct *poleis*, which were "fortified sites or towns" (Finley 27). This division led to an entire Greek world without unification. Each Greek city-state thought of itself only in terms of its internal population. There was no thought of identifying with the Greek nation as a whole.

Adding to this self-identification was the small population of people within each community. Individual populations are thought to have been "in four figures, often even in three" (Finley 46). With having such small populations of people, the kinship felt by each community would have been increased as a result. The society was based on a strict hierarchy. Finley writes that "a deep horizontal cleavage marked the world of the Homeric poems" (49). This line divided the *aristoi*—translating as "the best people"—from the nameless multitude of commoners (Finley 49). The *aristoi* were "hereditary nobles who held most of the wealth and all the power, in peace as in war" (Finley 49). This class division was rarely crossed, except during the time of wars and raids, setting up firm distinctions between the two classes. Further cementing this class distinction was the fact that there was no class of "nouveau riche." The economy made it so that "the creation of new fortunes, and thereby of nobles, was out of the

question" (Finley 49). Furthermore, "marriage was strictly class-bound," so there was no marrying into the upper-ranks (Finley 49). These two factors made it so that the lot of life that one was born into remained so one's entire life. There was no hope for improving one's status. Even on the battlefield, power belonged to the elite (Finley 49). This fact is evidenced by Homer's focus only on the heroes themselves, rather than the common soldiers. We do not receive any picture of the common man in Homer's poems, only the great men. In this way, it was impossible for a person of common birth to rise to heroism.

Homer cares so little for the common man that he does not distinguish between free and slave, with the exception of the aristocracy. However, it is important to note that Bronze Age Greece was a slave society. There were a large number of slaves, the majority being women, which were the disposable property of their masters. Slaves were primarily captured during wars or raids, in which the women—no matter what rank—were enslaved and the men were killed as there was no "economic or moral reason" to spare the lives of the men (Finley 49-50). In this way, whereas a person could not ascend in rank in Mycenaean Greece, it was quite possible to fall in rank into a lower class, even so far as to become a slave, having one's heroic capabilities taken away. The place of the slave was in the home, barring them from any opportunity of gaining glory.

Those who were free persons and not slaves, which made up the majority of the community, were not only independent householders but also herders and peasants, as well as specialists, such as "carpenters and metal workers, soothsayers, bards, and physicians" (Finley 51). These specialists made up a middle-class of sorts in the social hierarchy "because they supplied certain essential needs in a way that neither the lords nor the non-specialists among their followers could match" (Finley 51). They were granted some sort of status due to their

indispensability, yet they were in no way at the same status level of the aristocracy. The name for these specialists was the *demioergoi* or "those who work for the people" (Finley 51). This society was agrarian in nature and being thus, no specialists were needed to work in the fields, as every man could do the basic tasks required themselves. At the bottom of the social strata were the *thetes*, unfortunate men who had neither property nor attachments and who "worked for hire and begged what they could not steal" (Finley 53).

The most unfortunate aspect of being a *thes* was the fact that he belonged nowhere and to no one. This discussion of the *thes* is important when thinking about the status of Odysseus when he comes back to Ithaca from his travels. Being unacknowledged, he does not belong to his household until he is recognized as the hero. As Finley states, "The authoritarian household, the *oikos*, was the center around which life was organized, from which flowed not only the satisfaction of material needs…but ethical norms and values, duties, obligations, and responsibilities, social relationships, and relations with the gods" (Finley 54). In this way, having an *oikos* defined everything about a person in Bronze Age Greece. The word *oikos* does not simply refer to the family. Rather, it refers to the entirety of a person's household and goods. If one was lacking in any of these respects, one held no place in this society. If a man did not have his own *oikos* but instead was included in the *oikos* of another, he lost much of his freedom to do as he wished, having to align himself with those of the head of the household, but gained security and a vicarious place in society.

The idea of kinship and community permeated all aspects of life, including the political practices between Greeks. Political matters within this society were taken up during an assembly. Whereas private affairs remained within the realm of authority of the *oikos*, a public matter could only be solved by consultation within the assembly. The assembly itself was fluid

in nature, with no distinct structure, rather, the elders were given first opportunity to speak on the subject at hand and after they had finished, others could express their opinions as they desired until all voices had been heard (Finley 82). While those in the assembly were allowed to voice their concerns, there was no voting within the assembly. Ultimately, the king made the decision and could choose to accept the assembly's will, or not, as he desired (Finley 82). Furthermore, all decisions that were made were done in regards to *themis*, the customs and mores of the society, or "it is (or is not) done" (Finley 83, 84). The heroes themselves cannot be removed from their societies. Their actions are not for themselves solely, but for the society as a whole. As Redfield points out, "individuals are not seen as free, self-defining creatures confronting a society whose structure and values they are free to accept or reject. Rather, the Homeric actors are seen as embedded in a social fabric; they are persons whose acts and consciousness are the enactment of the social forces which play upon them" (20).

While the Mycenaean period was a structured time of growth for the Greeks, the Dark Age is characterized by exactly what its name suggests, being a time of relative devolution for the Greeks. The most significant example of this degeneration is the loss of literacy that the Greeks experienced during this time. While prior to the Dark Age the Greeks had inherited a system of writing from the Minoan civilization, termed Linear B, the use of this writing system fell out of use and the Greeks became an illiterate culture once more (Murnaghan l,li). Due to their lack of a means of writing, Greeks were forced to rely upon oral transmission in order to preserve "historical memories, religious beliefs, and shared stories," (Murnaghan li). While this form of oral communication lasted throughout the Dark Age, the end of the period, the time when Homer was writing, was marked by the adoption of an alphabet from the Phoenicians and a renewal of literacy (Murnaghan lii). On top of having no writing system, the Dark Age was a

time of "less material prosperity and less highly organized concentrations of political and military power" than prior periods of Greek civilizations (Murnaghan li). What remains that are associated with this period tell of a less impressive level of civilization than was seen in the Mycenaean period (Murnaghan li). Furthermore, this period of Greek society was referred to as the Dark Age also because there is little known about the time itself (Murnaghan li).

At the end of the Dark Age, when Homer began writing, there was an attempt to create a Pan-Hellenic heritage among all Greek-speaking nations. It was around this time that the Greeks instituted the Delphic oracle of Apollo, as well as the Olympic Games, both of which were meant to promote this cause (Murnaghan lii). Therefore, one can look at Homer's desire to write down the history of these heroes for preservation as in accord with this goal. Redfield writes that, "The heroic world is kept alive by the bards as the common possession of the public; heroic epic secures the public by giving it a world alternate to its own, a world between unreality and reality which its members can contemplate in common" (40). The age of heroes has passed but, by writing down and preserving their actions, their deeds become a shared history and point of pride for the Greeks of Homer's time.

Turning to the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the time in which Austen wrote, we see a society similar in its hierarchy and class structure, but in an age where larger-than-life heroes of the past can no longer exist. Much like the Mycenaean Greeks, the top of the social hierarchy was made up of landed gentry. Just as those who held the most wealth and land in Homer held the most power in the Greek society, the "economic and political productions" of an estate would give the landholder power in English society (Stewart 4). The estates of the landed gentry within this time period were subject to primogeniture, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as "the right of the firstborn child of a family, especially a son, to succeed or

inherit property or title to the exclusion of other claimants." In this manner, a gentleman's estate, and thus power, would pass to his eldest son, leaving the younger sons to make their own way in the world. By the nature of this estate economy, the eldest son would inherit a fixed income which was resistant to change of any kind. Any women in the family would be inherited as part of the estate (Stewart 3).

Whereas Bronze Age ideology made it impossible to make a fortune if one was not born to one, the emerging mercantile economy of the late eighteenth-century allowed for younger sons to make a comfortable life for themselves. Under mercantile economics, the younger sons had access to many ways to make their way without their father's title, such as "positions in the army, navy, and colonial services" (Stewart 5). Furthermore, whereas honor could only belong to the landed of Homer's society, by serving either in war or in imperial trade, a man could earn honor for himself (Stewart 5). In this way, the boundary between classes was less concrete. An officer, even if he came from low birth, would be accepted in polite society because of his station. Whereas in Homer's time, there was a distinct social divide between classes and each of these classes was subject to a shared culture, in Austen's time "Human beings are not…organized into discrete social totalities whose members share a singular and distinct culture; communication occurs…across all social boundaries, and boundaries themselves are communicative signs" (Handler and Segal 8). English society allowed for more interaction between classes, and thus, resulted in a fluidity of social structure that was less definite than that of the Greeks. One could change his or her fortune within this society—an idea very central within Austen's novels.

Gender Implications for Female Epic Heroes

One of the most important things that we must do in the discussion of this topic is to detail the different societal views on women, in Homeric Greece as well as in Austen's time, and relate the gender implications of these views in relation to a female heroine. In Homeric Greece, women were seen to hold an inferior status to men. Finley illustrates this fact as he writes, "Not only was this a man's world, it was one in which the inferior status of women was neither concealed nor idealized" (136). The female role in Homeric Greece was characterized by dependency on men. A woman is either a daughter or a wife; she cannot exist on her own. In this way, Redfield states that they represent a state of being a "permanent child" (120). This dependency is what separates women from the "active warrior on whom they must all rely" (Redfield 120). Indeed, the word "hero," in Greek, "has no feminine gender in the age of heroes" (Finley 25). Women lacked the physical agency to be a hero, so much so, that their own language could not recognize such a possibility. However, it is important to note that there was a disadvantage attached to being a hero. While a woman would always remain at home with her family, the hero was not able to do so. Because of the pressure put on them by society to become the consummate warrior, the men must sacrifice their domestic life. Redfield illustrates this topic best as he writes that the "Pain of the warrior's role" is that "on behalf of his family, [he] must leave his family, so that his very defense of them becomes a betrayal. The community can defend itself only with the loss of some of its members…there is thus a tension between obligations to household and to city, for in defending everyone the warrior must set aside his special obligations to those who are most truly his own" (123). The hero has no time to think of his own wants or those of his family. He must make the ultimate sacrifice in giving all of himself in order to win glory for his city which, despite the pain it causes both the hero and his

family, will lead to glory for both his family and himself. In this way, the hero has the freedom to do as he likes, just as long as his wishes align with what society expects from him.

Due to the fact that they were "denied the right to a heroic way of life, to feats of prowess, competitive games, and leadership in organized activity of any kind, women worked, regardless of class" (Finley 72). Since they could not win glory on the battlefield, they had to restrain their activities to domestic duties. As Finley writes, "The house was their domain" (72-3). However, even in Homeric Greece, women were able to achieve their own glory. If a woman's works in the domestic sphere were particularly good, they would be said to be *kluta,* meaning "famous" (Redfield 32). This denial of heroic virtue comes back to the fact that "women were held to be naturally inferior and therefore limited in their function to the production of offspring and the performance of household duties, and that the meaningful social relationships and the strong personal attachments were sought and found among men" (Finley 138). Because of their inferior nature, women were restrained to the domestic sphere. Furthermore, they were not even able to gain a position in society on their own. As Redfield states, "In Homer's world a woman's social position is defined by her relations with men" (122). Because of their reliance on men, the only way a woman could gain glory for herself was by aligning herself with a good husband. Marriage was the rule in the ancient world, with "no confirmed bachelors in the poems, and no spinsters" (Finley 137). However, even in marriage, an inferiority in the nature of women as opposed to men is recognized in that, "each of the two differs in virtue and function, in the ground for friendship, and therefore also in affection and friendship…the better (of the two), for example, should receive more affection than he gives" (Finley 139). Husbands, in Homer's society, deserved more affection than their wives—the inequality between the two sexes thus permeating all aspects of society.

In Austen's time, while more autonomy was given to women, they still lacked the freedom that came with being a man. One of the major differences between how women and men were viewed in the late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century was what came to define each gender. While men were self-defined, women were defined by "what other people, what the world, will make of them" (Fraiman 6). A woman did not have the luxury to decide the worth of her person. Every aspect of her life was under constant scrutiny by the world surrounding her, and the perceived image of her determined her place in society. Brownstein touches on this truth as she writes, "What the neighbors say can ruin a girl's life, and run like water off a duck's back off a boy's" (83). The entire course of a woman's life is at the mercy of how she is viewed in public. In summary, women are "dependent on what the neighbors say for their status as proper ladies" (Fraiman 83).

Furthermore, because of women's reliance on appearance and how they carried themselves in polite society, their virtues were seen as needing "constant cultivation" (Poovey 15). This need for cultivation led to the development of an entire genre of literature, courtesy books for women, which "reached a peak between 1760 and 1820," precisely in the time that Jane Austen was writing (Hemlow 732). According to *A Father's Legacy to His Daughters*, a popular courtesy book at the time, women should have a "modest reserve" and a "gentleness of spirit and manners" (Gregory 25, 33). In this characterization of the woman, she is described in a soft, passive sense, lacking any true power or strength—which are both necessary aspects of being a hero. Furthermore, women were prized for their "beauty and docility" rather than their intellectual worth, giving them an "ornamental place" in society (Woodworth 198). By being described as "ornaments," women lack the usefulness required in heroism. Likewise, women were supposed to be "silent in company," discouraged to exercise their verbal and intellectual

faculties (Gregory 26). This topic is also touched upon by Fraiman as she states, "A lady's word carries no definitive weight" (70). Their agency is taken away from them except when they "keep within the bounds of that propriety which is suitable" for women, restraining their agency to the home (Gregory 40). The qualities of a woman are considered useful as long as they apply to "women's work" and the "domestic concerts of a family" (Gregory 40). Just as managing the home was the woman's task in Homeric Greece, in Austen's time, "The domestic oeconomy of a family is entirely a woman's province, and furnishes a variety of subjects for the exertion both of good sense and good taste" (Gregory 43-4). Women's usefulness was restricted to the home, in which they were expected to exercise the "sense" and "taste" innate in their femininity.

The most important role that these courtesy novels had was in instructing women in matters of courtship and marriage. Indeed, this subject "occupies the position of climax or goal, reached presumably by means of taste and tact" (Fraiman 16). This assertion perfectly illustrates the act of making a good marriage as the achievement of a woman's *kleos*, being that it is defined as the goal of her life. In this way, "mental improvement appears to culminate with marriage" and "female maturity and gratification" is equated with marriage (Fraiman 16). However, in less romantic terms, marriage was a necessity for the survival of most women in Austen's time. As Fraiman bluntly puts it, "Lovers need to eat and…women often marry less from love than from economic desperation" (65). However, there is an exception to this rule in women, like Austen herself, who were able to maintain themselves on the basis of their own work instead of resorting to marriage to remain economically dependent. While a marriage with love is ideal, it is not always a possibility. As Gregory writes, "without an unusual share of natural sensibility and very particular good fortune, a woman in this country has very little probability of marrying for love" (62-3). Indeed, the fact that Austen's heroines achieve both

love and security in their matches surpasses the achievement of most women, adding to their *kleos*. This idea is echoed in the fact that women are "reliant on male admiration and marriage for their economic survival" (Fraiman 83). Van Ghent describes the marriage market in similar terms as a "hunt," stating, "The desperation of the hunt is the desperation of economic survival: girls…must succeed in running down solvent young men in order to survive" (101). If these women do not marry, they face an uncertain future. Marriage is not only necessary for their happiness, it is necessary for their survival.

While it is the woman who pursues the man, she is not allowed to reveal her feelings to him until he has avowed his love to her. Gregory advises, "It is a maxim laid down among you, and a very prudent one it is, that love is not to begin on your part, but is entirely to be the consequence of our attachment to you" (63). However, there is not always a guarantee that the person whom a woman desires most will return her affections. Her choice is limited as opposed to the "unlimited range" which men enjoy (Gregory 64). Gregory writes that, "A man of taste and delicacy marries a woman because he loves her more than any other. A woman of equal taste and delicacy marries him because she esteems him, and because he gives her that preference" (65). In this way, feeling esteem for her husband, and being grateful for his condescension in choosing her, are appropriate reasons for accepting a marriage—no mention is given to love on the woman's part. Furthermore, just as there was an inferiority in the nature of women in marriage, according to the law of coverture, "the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose wing, protection and cover, she performs everything" (Poovey 6-7). She is no longer her own person. She becomes "one" with her husband and, together, they make up one being. The only way a woman could be her own person was if she was a "widow" the

father "would have to be dead in order to cede control," as in the case of Emma (Woodworth 198). While the loss of one's identity might seem like a bad alternative, the other option given to women in Austen's time was becoming a "forlorn and unprotected…old maid," which was considered a terrible fate (Gregory 79). Although the eighteenth century woman lost some of her autonomy in ceding up her power in marriage, it was a more favorable alternative to an uncertain life alone.

Heroism in a Non-Heroic World

The Homeric heroes were characterized by their predestination for a life of heroic deeds. This "fate" is what made them "larger-than-life" (Redfield 36). In a world without fated heroism, a world in which anyone could change one's fortune, the larger-than-life hero becomes extinct, making way for the self-made hero. The larger-than-life hero is characterized by an existence in an extraordinary world; one in which they can "talk freely with the gods; they encounter monsters, speaking rivers, giants; their corpses can be magically transported and protected from decay" (Redfield 37). The heroines in Jane Austen's novels don't have this almost divine aspect to their characters. They are ordinary heroines in an ordinary world. The idea of the "ordinary" epic hero is one that George Eliot discusses in her prelude to *Middlemarch*. The example that Eliot uses is St. Theresa, as her "ideal nature demanded an epic life" and goes on to say that she "was certainly not the last of her kind" (xiii). In this way, Eliot shows us that the capacity to an epic life and the epic hero still exists. The problem that the new epic hero must deal with is that he or she exists in a non-heroic world. These new epic heroes, instead of being born into a society based on heroic deed, are rather born into a world of "no coherent social faith and order" (Eliot xiii). This lack of social cohesion was a direct result of a)

uncertainty that came with the industrialization and urbanization of society, b) the decline of religious prominence in English life, and c) such events as the French Revolution, which overturned the normal social order. The epic heroes of the past lived in a society which was so cohesive that their heroism was viewed as the heroism of all. In Austen's society, since there was no cohesion, there was no collective heroic goal. In this way, epic heroes did not go out of existence after the Mycenaean Age; rather, because the social order no longer allowed for larger-than-life heroic acts that defined a civilization, the nature of the hero had to change to one that was able to exist without recognition by society as a whole. Austen's heroines fall into this new category of epic hero in that while they gain their *kleos*, their doing so has no larger meaning for the society in which they existed.

Generic Differences between Epic and the Novel

This idea of lack of cohesion between the wants of society as a whole and that of the hero details one of the major differences between the novel and epic as genres. The term that is used to describe this distinction is "epic wholeness" (Bakhtin 37). This designation details the idea that the epic hero has no conflict with the desires of his society; what he wants, society also wants for him. This idea is further explained as the fact that, in epic, "individuals are not seen as free, self-defining creatures confronting a society whose structure and values they are free to accept or reject. Rather, the Homeric actors are seen as embedded in a social fabric; they are persons whose acts and consciousness are the enactment of the social forces which play upon them" (Redfield 20). However, in the novel, "a crucial tension develops between the external and the internal man" (Bakhtin 37). Throughout the novel, a hero must constantly learn to reconcile individual wants with what society demands of them. In Elizabeth's case, she must

reconcile her aversion to marrying without love to society's demand that she find a husband, no matter the status of her emotional attachment to him. In Emma's case, she must reconcile her wish not to marry and remain her own mistress to society's demand that she choose a husband to be her master. Holding with this argument, Brown suggests that the way that the heroine in Austen's novels reconciles "the self and the world" is through marriage (6).

While this tension does not exist in epic, in the sense that both society and the hero desire the hero to gain his *kleos*, there is some sense of internal conflict at work. With Achilles, he struggles with whether or not he should fight. He knows that if he fights, he will die, whereas if he refrains, he will live a long life. Furthermore, Achilles pulls himself from battle after Agamemnon dishonors him and this intermission in action, too, adds to Achilles' question of whether or not he should rejoin the fight. With Odysseus, he struggles with whether or not he should return home. It takes him ten years to return to Ithaca. On top of the divine obstacles which prevent his return home, Odysseus is tempted to remain with several different women to begin a new life with them instead of returning to his wife and family. Circe, Nausicaa, and Calypso all act as temptations for Odysseus not to return home. This concept of momentary struggle which is overcome by social duty is explained by Redfield as signifying how Homeric heroes have "no innerness" (21). In these moments in which the epic hero finds himself in doubt, "parts of himself become alien to himself; he argues with himself until he takes charge of himself and sees his way to action" (Redfield 21). When he seems at odds with society, he knows that the fault lies in himself, not in what society wants from him. In this way, there is some reconciliation that these epic heroes have to make with their duties to society at large. Nonetheless, they fulfill what society wants from them because it is also what they want for themselves.

While epic wholeness represents one difference between the novel and epic as genres, the major difference between the two lies in the idea of "epic distance." Bakhtin explains this concept in that "an absolute epic distance separates the epic world from contemporary reality, that is, from the time in which the singer (the author and his audience) lives" (13). Furthermore, "Both the singer and the listener, immanent in the epic as a genre, are located in the same time and on the same evaluative (hierarchal) plane, but the represented world of the heroes stands on an utterly different and inaccessible time-and-value plane, separated by epic distance" (Bakhtin 14). Epic is distinctive in that the audience which Homer wrote for was completely removed from the events of his narratives. They had nothing to relate to within the texts, because the time which the epics are written about was entirely different from their own. In this way, "The audience of epic…has no access to the world of epic except epic. The poet invents or preserves the epic world in his own way, and we are entirely in his hands" (Redfield 37). On the other hand, Jane Austen's audience is contemporary with the society that she depicts. Her novels hold stories that they recognize and that they can relate to. As Bakhtin writes, "Nothing is left of the distant epic image of the absolute past; the entire world and everything sacred in it is offered to us without any distancing at all, in a zone of crude contact, where we can grab at everything with our own hands" (26). There is no struggling to understand an ancient civilization and heroic past. The heroines of Austen are characters which her audience could understand; the trials that they go through are ones that the readers themselves are familiar with. Instead of offering an alternative world like epic, Austen hands her readers a depiction of real life. With the removal of this epic distance, the reader "may actually enter the novel," something entirely impossible in the concept of epic literature (Bakhtin 32).

Emma and the *Iliad*: Vanity in the Epic Hero

Since we have now laid out the major considerations in regarding the texts in comparison with each other, it is time to turn to the discussion of *Emma* and the *Iliad*. To begin, both texts focus on the reformation of the major faults of the hero and heroine. In *Emma*, the concentration is on Emma's vanity, which parallels the theme of Achilles' rage in the *Iliad*. Homer's text famously begins, "Rage: Sing, Goddess, Achilles' rage, / Black and murderous, that cost the Greeks / Incalculable pain" (*Iliad* 1.1-3). From the start of the poem, Homer alerts his reader to the focus of the text. In beginning the poem with Achilles' rage, the importance of this aspect of the hero is laid out to the reader. While it is clear that Achilles is a hero, it is just as clear that this rage is excessive and will have terrible costs to those that surround him. While Achilles rage itself leads him into fault, he has cause to feel it. Achilles' rage is initially provoked by Agamemnon's disrespect of Achilles' honor. After Agamemnon, the leader of the Greek army, has his prize taken away from him (a girl named Chryseis), he insists that Achilles give his own prize (a girl named Briseis) to him to make up for his loss, and to punish Achilles for presuming to challenge Agamemnon, stating, "I'm coming to your hut and taking Briseis, / Your own beautiful prize, so that you will see just how much / Stronger I am than you, and the next person will wince / At the thought of opposing me as an equal" (*Iliad* 1.194-7). The taking of Achilles' prize may seem petty, but, in the Bronze Age, a warrior's honor was measured tangibly by the amount of prizes that he possessed. Achilles complains, "Agamemnon / Has taken away my prize and dishonored me" (*Iliad* 1.369-70). This prize is one that Achilles has "sweated for" and one given to him by his comrades to denote his excellence in battle (*Iliad* 1.171). By having this prize taken away from him, and in so public a fashion, Achilles experiences the greatest affront to his heroism and his warrior mentality. Because of this injury, Achilles struggles to control his

emotions as he debates, "should he / Draw the sharp sword that hung by his thigh, / Scatter the ranks and gut Agamemnon, / Or control his temper, repress his rage?" (*Iliad* 1.199-202). He is not able to stay his sword on his own, but needs the intervention of the goddess Athena who promises Achilles that he will "get / Three times as many magnificent gifts" because of the arrogance of Agamemnon (*Iliad* 1.222-4). While Achilles is convinced to spare the life of Agamemnon, he refuses to let this wrong go unpaid. Therefore he pronounces, "I swear: / When every last Greek desperately misses Achilles, / Your remorse won't do any good then, / …And you will eat your heart out / Because you failed to honor the best Greek of all" (*Iliad* 1.254-9). With these words, Achilles, in what can only be termed as a selfish decision, removes himself from the war and sits aside while many Greek men die. This decision makes Achilles an "unlikeable" hero. By removing himself from battle and allowing his fellow Greeks to die, "Achilles [is] now no better" than Agamemnon (Toohey 32). The reader feels no sympathy for the hero; instead, "the reader feels revulsion for Achilles" (Toohey 40). His rage is sparked because of his vanity in his status as the best of the Greeks. As such, he believes that he deserves the honor that that title holds. In this way, Achilles' rage is inextricable from his vanity, making him the vain hero—just as Emma is the vain heroine.

However, Achilles' rage is not quenched by his decision to step out of battle. When withdrawn from the fight, Achilles "nursed his anger" and kept himself away from "that arena for glory" (*Iliad* 1.517-8). By removing himself from battle, he removes himself from his heroic purpose, becoming useless. Despite this uselessness, Achilles rage is so great that he refuses to relent. Too late, Agamemnon realizes his mistake in dishonoring Achilles. Nestor advises him, "You took his prize / And keep it still…Even now / We must think of how to win him back / With appeasing gifts and soothing words" (*Iliad* 9.115-8). As Nestor suggests, Agamemnon

should be able to convince Achilles to rejoin the fight by appealing to his honor and giving him more gifts. Agamemnon sees the wisdom of Nestor's words, admits that he is wrong, and offers to return Briseis, in addition to bestowing a number of other gifts onto Achilles. Nestor and Agamemnon decide on three men to send to appeal to Achilles: Phoenix, Ajax, and Odysseus. Upon their arrival at his tent, Achilles says "Things must be bad to bring you here, / The Greeks I love best, even in my rage" (*Iliad* 9.201-2). Achilles' rage is so consuming that even in this instance of counsel, it is still the foremost thought in his mind. Odysseus acknowledges the fact that "It is doubtful / That we [the Greeks] can save the ships without your strength" (*Iliad* 9.233-4). He continues, "you can still let go of your anger, right now. / Agamemnon is offering you worthy gifts / If you will give up your grudge" (*Iliad* 9.263-5). By this time, Achilles has made his point. He has made the Greeks suffer for his dishonor. This being the case, it is right that he would accept these terms and rejoin the fight. However, Achilles' selfish rage compels his every action, making him bypass the boundaries of what is right. He retorts, "Not even if Agamemnon gave me gifts / As numberless as grains of sand or dust, / Would he persuade me or touch my heart— / Not until he's paid in full for all my grief" (*Iliad* 9.397-400). It is wrong of Achilles to continue to refuse coming to the aid of the Greeks. Even Phoenix, who helped to raise Achilles as a child, admonishes Achilles for his actions stating, "you have to master your proud spirit. / It's not right for you to have a pitiless heart" (*Iliad* 9.509-10). Achilles' selfish rage correlates with a sort of vanity in that he knows that the Greeks need him to win and he is taking advantage of this fact. Ajax, too, weighs in on the impropriety of Achilles' actions when he says, "Achilles / Has made his great heart savage. / He is a cruel man, and has no regard / For the love that his friends honored him with," furthermore, calling him "pitiless" (*Iliad* 9.647-52). Achilles responds, "Everything you say is after my own heart. / But I swell with rage when I think of how

/ The son of Atreus treated me like dirt / In public, as if I were some worthless tramp" (*Iliad* 9.668-671). His rage keeps him from doing what is right. As Finley states, Achilles' "mistake was not made at the beginning; it came at the refusal of the penal gift, for that placed him temporarily beyond the heroic pale, that marked him as a man of unacceptable excesses" (126). Up until this moment, Achilles has been right in his anger. His refusal of reparations marks an indulgence in his rage that is truly unheroic.

After the Greeks had been suffering for some time without Achilles, Patroclus, who has also been removed from battle, decides to go to Achilles "to try to talk him into fighting. / God willing, I may be able to persuade him" (*Iliad* 15.415-7). He comes to Achilles, imploring, "Achilles, great as you are, / Don't be vengeful. They are dying out there, / All of our best…/ But you are incurable, /…You and your damned / Honor!" (*Iliad* 16.22-35). Even Patroclus, the most beloved of Achilles, sees the wrong in what Achilles does. He asks Achilles that if he himself will not join the fight, "at least send *me* out, let *me* lead a troop / of Myrmidons and light the way for our army. / And let me wear your armor" (*Iliad* 16.42-4). By asking to wear Achilles' armor, Patroclus acknowledges the fact that Achilles has a duty to the army, as the hero, that he is shirking. Patroclus thinks that if the army at least believes that Achilles is fighting with them—if he himself masquerades as the hero—the army's morale will pick up and the tide will turn against the Trojans. By Patroclus' speech, Achilles is finally able to let go of his anger towards Agamemnon. He states, "But we'll let that be. I never meant / To hold my grudge forever. But I did say / I would not relent from my anger until / The noise of battle lapped at my own ships' hulls. / So it's on your shoulders now" (*Iliad* 16.62-66). With this statement, when he relents in his anger, Achilles shows that he is not able to fully let go of his selfish reasons. He does not view himself as a part of the Greek community at large. For him,

his concern starts only when the battle reaches the ships of his own men, the Myrmidons. Until the battle reaches that point, Achilles feels as if he has no part in the war. Furthermore, his selfish vanity won't let him go back on his word, even though his anger abated before he said that it would. He intends to see his words through to the very end, no matter the cost to the Greeks around him. Achilles does decide, on being implored by Patroclus, to let Patroclus wear his arms and enter the battle. He tells him, "Win me my honor, my glory and my honor / From all the Greeks, and, as their restitution, / The girl Briseis, and many other gifts" (*Iliad* 16.87-9). What is notable about this statement is that even though Patroclus will be doing the actual fighting—the heroic deed—the *kleos* will still belong to Achilles. Secondly, whereas when Achilles was offered restitution— before he had relented in his rage—he said it would not be enough to entice him back, these same gifts are not just desired by Achilles upon his return, but are expected. His rage, having abated for the time being, his vanity flares and needs to be appeased.

Achilles does not rejoin the battle until Patroclus is killed by Hector in battle. In this moment, his rage that Agamemnon began is not abated, but is transformed into an even more savage rage towards Hector and all of the Trojan people. He immediately feels remorse for his actions in removing himself from battle because if he had rejoined the fight, he never would have sent Patroclus in his place and he might still be alive. Achilles laments, "I was no help / To him when he was killed out there… / …or any of the rest / Of my friends who have been beaten by Hector, / But just squatted by my ships, a dead weight on the earth" (*Iliad* 18.102-109). He recognizes that he did no good in sitting out of battle; he lacked purpose and caused pain to those that he has an obligation to protect. He formally acknowledges his decision to return to battle and end his rage towards Agamemnon stating, "But we'll all let that be, no matter how it hurts, /

And conquer our pride, because we must. / I hereby end my anger" (*Iliad* 19.77-79). Because of Patroclus' death, he is able to look past the injury that Agamemnon gave to his honor because now, Patroclus' death is the greatest injury that he feels and in order to remedy it, he must turn all of his attention to war and the death of Hector. He says as much to his comrades as he encourages them, "War is mine / …We have work to do. I want each one of you / To see Achilles fighting on the front line, / Destroying the Trojan ranks with his spear. / Have that image in mind as you fight your man" (*Iliad* 19.162-167). His rage continues, throughout the rest of the epic, and isn't abandoned until the very end of the poem.

Just as the *Iliad* begins with rage, *Emma* begins with the vanity of its heroine. The first line reads, "Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her" (*Emma* 587). Just as Homer, by his initial lines of his poem alerts the reader to the major topic of the epic, by choosing this particular opening, Jane Austen tells the reader that her story will be about a woman who wants for nothing and who has lived a coddled, privileged life. She continues to form this picture of her heroine's vanity stating, "The real evils, indeed, of Emma's situation were the power of having rather too much her own way, and a disposition to think a little too well of herself" (*Emma* 587). In this introduction to Emma, we see the very essence of her vanity defined, but Austen makes sure that she represents Emma's vanity as a fault, one that, as the novel progresses, will hopefully be reformed. This selfishness is what makes Emma, like Achilles, an "unlikeable" heroine. When writing *Emma*, Jane Austen said that she was "a heroine whom no one but myself will much like" (Butler 266). Because of her self-importance and lack of consideration of others, the reader has very little sympathy for Emma. Due to her vanity, Emma

does "just what she liked" and is "directed chiefly by her own" judgment (*Emma* 587). She does what she likes with no regard to how her actions affect those surrounding her, just like Achilles.

This self-proscribed designation of knowing the best in all situations manifests itself in Emma's endeavors to make matches for all the single people around her. The impressionable Harriet looks to Emma as "knowing everything" and even says, "You (blushing as she spoke) who can see into every body's heart; but nobody else" (*Emma* 602, 774). Emma's ability to make matches is what she calls a "talent" and she convinces the people around her that it is so (excepting, of course, Mr. Knightley). Her belief in her "talent" comes from the fact that she made the match between her good friends Mr. and Mrs. Weston. Her father reprimands her with, "I wish you would not make matches and foretell things, for whatever you say always comes to pass" (*Emma* 590). With this match successfully joined, Emma's vanity inflates and she thinks that she can do no wrong in this business, calling it "the greatest amusement in the world" (Emma 590). Because her own vanity is gratified in the making of these matches, she does not recognize how wrong it is to be meddling in the lives of other people. Just as Achilles' selfish vanity and rage caused harm to the physical wellbeing of his comrades, "if not repaired Emma's insolence…will materially damage the social and financial wellbeing of her acquaintances" (Overmann 3). Butler describes Emma as "intoxicated with vanity," much in the same way that Achilles is intoxicated with rage (256). Both hero and heroine are driven in all their actions by their judgment which is clouded by this intoxication. Similarly to Achilles' story being about the release of his anger, Emma's narrative follows a story line focused around the dissipation of her vanity, under the tutelage of Mr. Knightley.

As both Achilles and Emma are flawed heroes, they both exhibit a very narrow understanding of the world around them, only insomuch as it conforms to their wishes. Redfield

describes Achilles' limited thought-process stating, "He leaves each topic only to return to it, as though his mind were prowling within the closed circle of his rage" (7). All of his thoughts pertain to how the world interacts with the rage within him. Achilles is shown as having "great intelligence, but insensitive. He sees the situation clearly, but he does not see it as it appears to others" (Redfield 13). Furthermore, "he sees the situation so clearly because he only sees part of it. Achilles, with his instinctive rhetorical resources, dramatizes this partial vision to himself until it fills his view and leaves no place for qualifications" (Redfield 13). If you insert Emma's name instead of Achilles' into this sentiment, it would remain just as accurate. Both hero and heroine fall short because they only see situations in the way that they relate to themselves. Achilles pulls himself from battle because his view of the situation is that he has been wronged by Agamemnon, completely forgetting that other people rely on him and by shirking his duty, he is letting them down and wronging them. Emma misreads all of the relationships she sees between those around her, following her one success of Mr. and Mrs. Weston, because "She had taken up the idea, she supposed, and made everything bend to it" (*Emma* 648-9). If desires pollute her understanding of almost every situation within the novel and if something does not fall into what she has accepted to be reality, she immediately rejects it, as when Mr. Knightley suggests that Jane Fairfax and Frank Churchill might have a preference for each other. On hearing of his suspicions, Emma responds, "Oh! You amuse me excessively…There is not admiration between them, I do assure you" (*Emma* 749). Because she believes Frank Churchill to be in love with herself and that he has a tremendous dislike for Jane Fairfax, she fails to see the truth of Mr. Knightley's perception of their relationship. As Butler states, "…Emma has suppressed such facts, because they do not fit her favourite schemes" (251). Similar conclusions can be made on the success of Achilles and Emma in becoming heroes. Redfield states that "In

the *Iliad*, the greatness of a man lies not in his capacity to construct an inner synthesis of his experience but in his effect on others" (22). In *Emma*, "The theme…is the struggle towards a fixed and permanent truth external to the individual; and chastening, necessarily, to individual presumption and self-consequence" (Butler 260). In both cases, the hero and heroine grow by learning to look outside of themselves at the external reality, rather than by living in their internal perceived truths. Indeed, "There is a moral obligation to live outside the self, in honest communication with others" (Butler 258).

Achilles and Emma are both faced with two separate life paths which will determine their paths as epic heroes. For Achilles, he must choose between fighting, and dying, at Troy, or sailing home to live a long life with his family. Achilles is fully aware of this choice, and it is one that he struggles with for the majority of his epic. The only incentive to stay in Troy is to win *kleos*. At the beginning of the poem, when Achilles is dishonored by Agamemnon—taking away the only reason he came to fight in the first place—Achilles threatens, "Well, I'm going back to Phthia now. Far better / To head home with my curved ships than stay here, / Unhonored myself and piling up a fortune for you" (*Iliad* 1.179-81). If there is no glory for him at Troy, he doesn't want to be there. He complains to his mother, "since you bore me for a short life only, / Olympian Zeus was supposed to grant me honor. / Well, he hasn't given me any at all" (*Iliad* 1.367-9). If he does not receive honor, he wishes to leave because he "longs for home" (Redfield 17). However, his mother—the goddess Thetis—goes to Zeus and beseeches, "Honor my son, doomed to die young / …Grant my son the honor he deserves" (Iliad 1.536-41). Zeus agrees and Achilles' destiny is secured. Finley makes the point that, Achilles is a hero "not because at the call of duty [he] marched proudly to [his] death—on the contrary, [he] railed openly against [his] doom…but because at the call of honor [he] obeyed the call of the hero without flinching and

without questioning" (121). In this vein, Achilles complains, "Coward and hero get the same reward: / You die whether you slack off or work" (*Iliad* 9.326-7). He will earn his *kleos* because that is what the hero does, even at the expense of his life.

Emma, likewise, has two choices placed in front of her, and has to decide whether she should remain single and be her own master in her father's house or get married and give up that freedom. Emma has a singular situation in that she is a single woman who doesn't need to get married to be saved. She is a "mannish" heroine and as such, is given more freedom than others of her gender, allowing her to better fulfill her role as the epic hero (Woodworth 191). Emma does not need "to marry to improve financial situation or social position" (Overmann 2). Indeed, unlike most women who have no choice but to marry anyone who applies to them, Emma vows that she will not marry at all. As she explains to Harriet, "I have none of the usual inducements of women to marry…without love, I am sure I should be a fool to change such a situation as mine. Fortune I do not want, employment I do not want; consequence I do not want; I believe few married women are half as much mistress of their husband's house as I am of Hartfield" (*Emma* 626). She is the daughter of a gentleman of property who has enough money to sustain her even after his death and who is such an invalid (by choice) that Emma acts as head of the estate. As Overmann points out, "Emma is relatively free from male authority" and, instead of having to be taken care of by her father, she is the one that has to take care of him (4). While all of the other women in the novel are depicted as "silly," "only Emma, who possesses powers of mind and exercises the powers of Regent in her father's stead, is exempt" from this designation (Woodworth 197). Similarly, Butler describes Emma as "the real ruler of the household at Hartfield" (251). Furthermore, Emma is the "natural feminine leader of her whole community" (Butler 251). All those surrounding her bend their wills to fit her own because "in every respect,

it suited Emma best to lead" (*Emma* 691). The people of Highbury "can do nothing satisfactorily without" the opinion of Emma (*Emma* 703).

Interestingly enough, the only one of Emma's peers that does not look at her as without fault is the one man that she can imagine her allying herself with. Austen writes, "Mr. Knightley, in fact, was one of the few people who could see faults in Emma Woodhouse, and the only one who ever told her of them" (*Emma* 590). Emma herself observes, "Mr. Knightley loves to find fault with me, you know…We always say what we like to one another" (*Emma* 590). This honesty of feeling that exists between Mr. Knightley and Emma is what makes their match a favorable one. If Emma marries Mr. Knightley, they would have a "union of equals" because Mr. Knightley refuses "to put Emma on a pedestal and worship her in the manner of a courtly lover," instead looking for "moral and mental equality" in her (Woodworth 198). For Emma, marrying "would mean submitting to continued moral assessment by a mature man, who would fortify the stronger, more rational, objective, and stringent side of Emma's mind" (Butler 252). This advantage is one that cannot be but beneficial to Emma and, furthermore, is the means to ridding herself of her excessive vanity. While it means submission and the giving up the freedom to be her own mistress, marriage would provide Emma with an equal in intelligence and character to share her life with.

According to Toohey, the moral of the *Iliad*, and arguably of *Emma*, is not to overstep one's sphere (36). However, I think it more probable that in order to become an epic hero, one must step outside of his or her sphere. Achilles has to overstep his sphere in order to best embody his warrior self. Although Achilles' rage is his greatest fault and is an excess that pushes him past what is right for his sphere, it is also the force that drives him to perform all of his heroic deeds. As demonstrated earlier, without Achilles' rage, he would not have regained

the honor that Agamemnon took from him. Furthermore, Achilles' absence from battle during the period of his rage against Agamemnon exhibits just how powerful he is compared to the other Greeks. Without Achilles, the Greeks were "pummeled and torn" with "no hope" of taking "Troy's tall town" (*Iliad* 9.9, 9.31). This image is directly opposed to the one that Achilles gives us of the Greeks' success with him in battle saying, "When I used to fight for the Greeks, / Hector wouldn't come out farther from his wall / Than the oak tree by the Western Gate. / He waited for me there once, and barely escaped" (*Iliad* 9.362-365). With Achilles in the war, the Greeks were dominant, so much so, that the Trojans could barely leave the confines of their walls. With the removal of this one hero, the entire tide of the battle has shifted and the Trojans have such an advantage that the Greeks have lost all hope of winning unless they can convince Achilles to return. Furthermore, without his rage, Achilles would never have rejoined the war effort and killed Hector, deciding the outcome of the war and the achievement of his glory. His warrior spirit is rekindled by his rage. Achilles is a "man with no gentleness in him, / A man with one purpose," and that purpose is to be the most fearsome warrior (*Iliad* 20.482-3). He does all that it takes to achieve his *kleos,* even at the expense of societal norms—such as disregarding what is owed to the dead, threatening to act in a savage nature, and disrespecting what is owed to the suppliant in battle (*Iliad* 23.75-77, 22.385, 23.25-26, 20.483-5). However, the same rage that pushes himself outside of the limits of his sphere is the same aspect of his character that sets him above his peers as the embodiment of the warrior. In the end, he does achieve his *kleos,* and his rage—in pushing himself outside of his sphere—is instrumental in this achievement.

Similarly, Emma, too, must overstep her sphere and become more than just a woman, because that is what a heroine does. As we have seen in the discussion of gender, a normal woman who acts within her feminine sphere lacks agency. Upper-class women are

"stereotypically idle" and have a "restricted" geography (Overmann 5). As Overmann demonstrates, "Emma's talents and energy, under the gender restrictions of idleness and a small, unvaried environment, make her bored; her boredom inspires her to act, and when she does, she gets herself and others into trouble" (5). Just like Achilles, although Emma's venture in overstepping her sphere is not entirely right and beneficial, it allows her to *act*, and that alone is novel. She is given the freedom to do as she pleases, which is not a liberty granted to most women, even if that liberty comes at the cost of being wrong most of the time. However, it is important that Emma is given the opportunity to make mistakes which is why she is "free to act out her willful errors, for which she must take entire moral responsibility" (Butler 251). She must have the freedom to do what is false before she can learn what is true and become the true heroine. Indeed, "Nothing, but that the lessons of her past folly might teach her humility and circumspection in the future" (*Emma* 808). This liberty is granted her because she is given a "man's advantages" (Overmann 7). Emma is the leader of her community and all judgment defers to hers, something that is definitely not normal for a woman. If her character focused more on the desirability of "beauty…and…temper, the highest claims a woman could possess," which is what society thought was the most a woman could accomplish, she would be insipid rather than heroic (*Emma* 615). Rather, she is praised for her clever wit and demonstrates that women should be prized more for their "well-informed minds instead of handsome faces" (*Emma* 615). By surpassing what is deemed proper for her sphere, Emma is given an equality with Mr. Knightley that provides her with the agency she would have lacked, had she been bound by her feminine sphere (Woodworth 198).

Pride and Prejudice and the *Odyssey*: Studying the Clever Hero

While Emma and Achilles can be characterized as representative of the vain epic hero, Elizabeth Bennet and Odysseus represent the cunning epic hero. In the *Odyssey*, well-known is the fact that Odysseus is a king of wily wit and craft. Even the goddess Athena, who favors Odysseus for this very reason, recognizes Odysseus' exemplary cunning as she states, "Any man…would have to be / some champion lying cheat to get past you / for all-round craft and guile," furthermore calling him "foxy, ingenious, never tired of twists and tricks" and "the best at tactics, spinning yarns" (*Odyssey* 13.329-339). Just like Athena, the reader is drawn to Odysseus' witty nature and roots for him throughout his journey. Odysseus' quick and clever wit is his defining characteristic and is what aids him most on his journeys, marking all of his deeds and allowing him to return home to Ithaca. It is Odysseus' "cunning trap" of the Trojan horse which leads to the final defeat of Troy (*Odyssey* 8.553). Perhaps the best example of Odysseus' cunning is his clever art in deceiving and escaping from the man-eating Cyclops, Polyphemus. Odysseus and his men are trapped in the Cyclops' cave, facing impending death. Polyphemus' tries to trick Odysseus into revealing the whereabouts of their ship but Odysseus is too aware of artful ways to play into the Cyclops' trap as he reveals that he will respond in his "crafty way" (*Odyssey* 9.318). Instead of revealing his true identity to the Cyclops, Odysseus says that his name is "Nobody" (*Odyssey* 9.410). He then convinces the Cyclops to get drunk off an offering of wine, which causes the Cyclops to fall asleep, during which time, by Odysseus' design, he and his men blind the Cyclops. At the Cyclops' screams, his neighbor's respond but when they ask who is hurting him, he says, "*Nobody*, friends… / Nobody's killing me now by fraud and not by force!" (*Odyssey* 9.454-5). Thus, Odysseus' cunning use of a false identity tricks the other Cyclopes into thinking that nothing is wrong and that Polyphemus has done this

injury to himself. Once the Cyclops lets his sheep out to graze, Odysseus uses the opportunity to escape by having his men cling to the bellies of the beasts, allowing them to escape the inquiring hands of Polyphemus who pats the top of each animal in turn to prevent such an event. However, with great cunning comes great pride in one's abilities and as such, Odysseus is not content to leave the Cyclops without the knowledge that it was he who defeated him by his clever mind. Odysseus' men try to dissuade him, calling him "headstrong" but still, he shouts to Polyphemus, "Cyclops— / if any man on the face of the earth should ask you / who blinded you, shamed you so—say Odysseus" (*Odyssey* 9.558-60). As the epic hero, he requires recognition for his great deeds and is not satisfied without it. Unfortunately, by this revelation, Polyphemus is able to identify this injury to his father, the god Poseidon, and it is by this event that Odysseus endures the painful 10 year hindrance before returning home. Even though he is such a cunning hero, he is not able to escape the damning effects of pride.

Of all the Bennet sisters, Lizzy is the one who is gifted with "quickness" of mind, and it is by this designation that she prides herself (*Pride and Prejudice* 180). Elizabeth is known for her "wit" and "vivacity," always exhibiting, like Odysseus, her gifts in intellect and conversation (*Pride and Prejudice* 228). Butler rightly remarks that "the reader cannot help admiring Elizabeth's wit and sharing her lively and satirical vision" (216). Like Odysseus, Elizabeth's wit evokes the sentiment of the reader, making her relatable and likeable. She prefers to be viewed as a "rational creature, speaking truth from her heart" rather than merely as an "elegant female" (*Pride and Prejudice* 230). By her own view of herself, her wit sets her apart from others of her sex, aligning her mental capacities more with those of a man. According to the popular view of the day, in a woman, "wit is the most dangerous talent you can possess" (Gregory 28). A woman with wit does not exhibit the characteristics of what a woman ought to be. Gregory advises, "Be

even cautious in displaying your good sense…if you happen to have any learning, keep it a profound secret, especially from the men, who generally look with a jealous and malignant eye on a woman of great parts, and cultivated understanding" (Gregory 28-9). By this standard, Elizabeth Bennet's nature does not align with the depiction of the proper woman of her day. She is a woman in form, but more than a woman in understanding, setting her apart from others of her sex, which as stated earlier in the discussion of Emma, allows her to exhibit her epic nature. Along with this statement, Mr. Darcy reveals that he loves Elizabeth "for the liveliness of your mind" (*Pride and Prejudice* 356). Elizabeth exhibits "masculine alacrity" instead of "slow-witted femininity" (Fraiman 72). Elizabeth has a "surplus of intellectual confidence and authority" that sets her apart from not only the other women in the novel, but most of the men (Fraiman 63). Whereas other characters are silly and uninformed, Lizzy is always self-aware and has something to say on any subject. Her presence of mind allows her not to be swayed by others, sticking stringently to her beliefs, as she is "fearless and independent" (Butler 199). However, like Odysseus, her excess of wit leads her into the fault of pride. Elizabeth prefers "wit to justice," and is unable to see where she has been wrong, as she "prides herself on her individualism and trusts her perceptions" (Butler 209). She becomes "intoxicated by the pleasure of attacking him [Darcy], often says what she does not mean," at the expense of being witty (Butler 216). Just like Odysseus, Elizabeth's wit and independence sometimes earn her the title of "headstrong" (*Pride and Prejudice* 230). Her reliance on her own wit and judgment blind her from reality and as such, almost cause her to lose her opportunity of gaining *kleos*, just as Odysseus is hindered from gaining his own.

One of the ways in which both the *Odyssey* and *Pride and Prejudice* attempt to lead their hero and heroine, as well as their audiences, to choose the morally correct path is by utilizing a

double story line—one of lust and one of love. Although the focus of this paper is comparing Austen's heroines to Homer's epic heroes, for this part of the discussion, it is necessary to dwell on the character of Penelope, Odysseus' wife, and how she relates to the woman hero. Penelope is described as the honest, loyal, and virtuous wife, continually pining, "How I long for my husband—alive in memory, always" (*Odyssey* 1.393). However, her virtues are augmented by Homer's setting them up directly against the failings of both Clytemnestra, Agamemnon's wife, and Helen, Menelaus' wife, within the duties of their positions. Whereas Penelope remains loyal to Odysseus, despite his being gone from home for 20 years, both of these women betray their husbands to lead lustful relationships with other men. While Odysseus' and Penelope's fate of being separated for 20 years is lamentable, Athena points out that it is still preferable to what Agamemnon faced upon his return from the Trojan War. She exclaims, "Myself, I'd rather / sail through years of trouble and labor home / and see that blessed day, than hurry home / to die at my own hearth like Agamemnon, / killed by Aegisthus' cunning—by his own wife" (*Odyssey* 3.264-8). Agamemnon's hateful wife, Clytemnestra, forsakes her marriage to begin an affair with Agamemnon's rival Aegisthus while Agamemnon is away. However, Clytemnestra wasn't always unfaithful to Agamemnon, for "at first…she spurned the idea of such an outrage, / Clytemnestra the queen, her will was faithful still" (*Odyssey* 3.302-3). Once she gives into Aegisthus, she enacts the greatest evil and plots the death of her husband. When Odysseus goes to the Underworld, he speaks to the ghost of Agamemnon, who laments, "there's nothing more deadly, bestial than a woman / set on works like these—what a monstrous thing / she plotted, slaughtered her own lawful husband!" (*Odyssey* 11.484-6). To this Odysseus responds that the gods' "trustiest weapon women's twisted wiles. / What armies of us died for the sake of Helen… / Clytemnestra schemed your death while you were world's away!" (*Odyssey* 11.496-8). In this

way, Helen is also implicated in the wrongs of women. Not only was she the cause for the Trojan War, but it was due to her faithlessness as a wife, running off with the Trojan prince, Paris. However, the Helen that we meet in the *Odyssey* is sorry for her wrongs calling herself a "shameless whore" (*Odyssey* 4.162). She gives an excuse for her actions stating, "I yearned / to sail back home again! I grieved too late for the madness / Aphrodite sent me, luring me there, far from my dear land, / forsaking my own child, my bridal bed, my husband too" (*Odyssey* 4.292-5). This Helen, though she appears sorry for her actions, still was the cause of death for all of those that died at Troy. Her actions had repercussions far beyond her immediate family. Both of these women are representative of what could happen to Penelope, should she choose to give up on the return of Odysseus and forsake her marriage. Penelope is conscious of this fact as she says, "Remember Helen of Argos… / would she have sported so in a stranger's bed / if she had dreamed that Achaea's sons were doomed / to fight and die to bring her home again? / Some god spurred her to do her shameless work. / Not till then did her mind conceive that madness, / blinding madness that caused her anguish, ours as well" (*Odyssey* 23.246-52). However, the ghost of Agamemnon points out that Odysseus won't have to worry about this exalting, "Happy Odysseus! / …mastermind—what a fine, faithful wife you won! / What good sense resided in your Penelope— / how well Icarius' daughter remembered you, / Odysseus, the man she married once! / The fame of her great virtue will never die. / …A far cry from the daughter of Tyndareus, Clytemnestra— / what outrage she committed, killing the man she married once!" (*Odyssey* 24.210-20). In this way, Penelope wins a sort of *kleos*, through her exemplary actions within the feminine sphere, giving her everlasting fame as a virtuous woman. Redfield notes that "the disguised Odysseus congratulates Penelope on her kleos…Penelope responds that if only Odysseus came home, her kleos would be 'greater'" (34). In this way, her *kleos* means nothing

without her husband. As Finley states, "Penelope became a moral heroine for later generations, the embodiment of goodness and chastity, to be contrasted with the faithless, murdering Clytemnestra" (25).

What is most interesting about Penelope's virtue, and what connects her to Elizabeth as a heroine, is that she, like her husband, is associated with being cunning and this ability is the instrument through which she conducts her loyalty to her husband (Toohey 48). Her domestic situation, during the absence of her husband, is dire. While courting Penelope, the suitors "had literally taken over the household of the absent Odysseus and were steadily eating and drinking their way through his vast stores" (Finley 48). When Telemachus, the son of Odysseus and Penelope, confronts the suitors, they respond that "it's not the suitors here who deserve the blame, / it's your own dear mother, the matchless queen of cunning" (*Odyssey* 2.94-5). Furthermore, they attribute "a fine mind/ and subtle wiles" as the gifts of Penelope (*Odyssey* 2.129-30). Penelope lives up to this characterization in her actions in holding off the suitors. She begins weaving a funeral shroud for her father-in-law Laertes on a loom and promises the suitors that once she finishes, she will choose a husband from among them. However, as the suitors demonstrate, "by day she'd weave at her great and growing web— / by night, by the light of the torches set beside her, / she would unravel all she'd done. Three whole years / she deceived us blind, seduced us with this scheme" (*Odyssey* 2.115-8). Because she possesses cunning, she is able to enact a scheme that usually would be outside of the ability of a single woman.

Whereas Penelope, as a woman, is beholden to her chastity, the sexual double-standard allows Odysseus to carry on affairs throughout his journey. Calypso, one of Odysseus' lovers, comments on this double-standard in her own relationship with Odysseus in relation to the male

gods stating, "Hard-hearted / you are, you gods! You unrivaled lords of jealousy— / scandalized when goddesses sleep with mortals, / openly, even when one has made the man her husband / …So now at last, you gods, you train your spite on me / for keeping a mortal man beside me" (*Odyssey* 5.130-44). All women were held to an unequal standard when it came to their sexuality, including goddesses. While monogamous marriage was practiced, "the meaning of monogamy must not be misconstrued" in that it did not impose "monogamous sexuality on the male" (Finley 137). Odysseus can carry on as many sexual relationships as he likes, and that is precisely what he does. He relates, "Calypso the lustrous goddess tried to hold me back, / deep in her arching caverns, craving me for a husband. / So did Circe, holding me just as warmly in her halls, / the bewitching queen of Aeaea keen to have me too. / But they never won the heart inside me, never" (*Odyssey* 9.33-7). While he carries on sexual affairs with both of these women, he makes a point of showing that he never loved either of them the way that he loves his wife. However, in both situations he is tempted to remain with these women, which is why he remains with them for a number of years. Calypso offers to make him "immortal, ageless all his days" (*Odyssey* 5.151). Furthermore, it is not until one of his sailors upbraids him with "Captain, this is madness! / High time you thought of your own home at last," that he even thinks of leaving Circe (*Odyssey* 10.520-1). There is one more temptation for Odysseus on his journey in the person of Nausicaa, daughter of King Alcinous. Nausicaa is described as "a match for the deathless gods in build and beauty" and she is an unwed virgin (*Odyssey* 6.19). Upon seeing her, Odysseus states, "but he is the one / more blest than all other men alive, that man / who sways you with gifts and leads you home, his bride!" (*Odyssey* 172-4). Nausicaa, too, looks on Odysseus longingly as she exclaims, "Ah, if only a man like that were called my husband, / lived right here, pleased to stay forever…" (*Odyssey* 6.269-70). It is obvious that Odysseus lusts after

the young maiden, and she returns his favor. Odysseus is offered the ultimate temptation by Alcinous, "Seeing the man you are, seeing we think as one— / *you* could wed my daughter and be my son-in-law / and stay right here with us. I'd give you a house / and great wealth—if you chose to stay, that is" (*Odyssey* 7.357-60). He is offered a new life of wealth and love with Nausicaa. In passing over this opportunity, Odysseus withstands the ultimate temptation. Griffin summarizes these relationships stating, "Each represents a type and offers a different relationship, to which the wandering hero might have abandoned himself, forgetting his wife and home. That he resists them all brings out his unconquerable resolution" (58). By being able to leave these three temptations behind, he is able to continue down his heroic path to return home.

Much like the warning tales of Clytemnestra and Helen for Penelope, Elizabeth is given an example of how her life could have turned out had she made the wrong decision in the character of her youngest sister, Lydia. Fraiman points out that "Lydia is a foil for Elizabeth, one sister's folly held up to the other's wisdom" (80). Lydia's tale is a "counternarrative of seduction and surrender" (Fraiman 80). Whereas Elizabeth prizes love in connection with marriage, Lydia has no such scruples. While Elizabeth cares more for substance of mind, Lydia is concerned with shallow appearances only. Lydia's downfall begins when she travels to Brighton with the militia. Upon this design, Elizabeth warns her father, "If you, my dear father, will not take the trouble of checking her exuberant spirits, and of teaching her that her present pursuits are not to be the business of her life, she will soon be beyond the reach of amendment. Her character will be fixed, and she will, at sixteen, be the most determined flirt that ever made herself and her family ridiculous" (*Pride and Prejudice* 286). Lizzy's wise words turn to fruition and Lydia disgraces her family by eloping with Mr. Wickham, who early in the novel was singled out as the object of Elizabeth's affection. Initially, Mr. Wickham has no plans of

actually marrying Lydia. It is only after he is offered monetary compensation by both Mr. Darcy, the true hero, and Mr. Bennet that he agrees to honorably marry Lydia. Lydia, by giving in to lust and ruining her honor before marriage, taints all of her sisters as well. Fraiman details this in her statement, "female reputation is so fragile that Elizabeth can be severely shaken by a quake of talk whose epicenter is Lydia" (83). Elizabeth herself acknowledges this fact when she laments, "everything *must* sink under such a proof of family weakness, such an assurance of the deepest disgrace," feeling that she no longer has any hope of making a match with Mr. Darcy (*Pride and Prejudice* 306). Even Mr. Collins weighs in on the subject stating that Lydia's "death…would have been a blessing in comparison to this" (*Pride and Prejudice* 315). In the end, Lydia is trapped in a loveless marriage in which "they were always moving from place to place in quest of a cheap situation, and always spending more than they ought" (*Pride and Prejudice* 359). This is the fate that Lizzy escapes by not choosing Wickham herself.

As Odysseus was tempted from his true moral path by several lovers, Elizabeth, too faces temptations to settle in marriage with Mr. Wickham, Mr. Collins, and Colonel Fitzwilliam, before coming to the realization that Mr. Darcy embodies where her true glory lies. The least of these temptations, that of Mr. Collins' proposal of marriage, does not hold any true value for Elizabeth. She does not esteem Mr. Collins, considering him to be "an oddity" who lacks sense yet affects a pompous air (*Pride and Prejudice* 208). However, while Lizzy has no affection for Mr. Collins, he still presents a temptation in that he does make her an offer of marriage which, as he points out to her, "in spite of your manifold attractions, it is by no means certain that another offer of marriage may ever be made you" (*Pride and Prejudice* 229-30). Mr. Collins, in this perhaps insensitive statement, is absolutely correct. By turning down his proposal, she forfeits a certain position in life, instead leaving her to a life of possible spinsterhood. Our heroine would

not deserve her standing as such if she did make a match without affection or respect for her partner. Colonel Fitzwilliam, the cousin of Mr. Darcy, poses more of a threat to Elizabeth's choice. He is a man that Elizabeth both respects and has affection for. Elizabeth's closest friend, Charlotte Lucas observes, "she sometimes planned her marrying Colonel Fitzwilliam. He was beyond comparison the most pleasant man; he certainly admired her, and his situation in life was most eligible" (*Pride and Prejudice* 261). Elizabeth herself does not look unfavorably on such a match, as she reflects on Mr. Darcy's allusions to her staying at Rosings in the future to mean that Colonel Fitzwilliam will make a proposal to her (*Pride and Prejudice* 263). However, due to Colonel Fitzwilliam's status as a second son, he is unable to make such an offer to Elizabeth, even though he may wish to, as he relates, "Younger sons cannot marry where they like…our habits of expense make us too dependent, and there are not many in my rank of life who can afford to marry without some attention to money" (*Pride and Prejudice* 263). Once more, she overcomes temptation to her affections. Her will is most tested in the case of Mr. Wickham, the very same man who brings her sister to ruin later in the novel. Mr. Wickham is described as having "all the best part of beauty, a fine countenance, a good figure, and very pleasing address" (*Pride and Prejudice* 212). Lizzy is immediately taken with him and delights in everything that he does. When thinking of the ball at Netherfield, it is noted that "Elizabeth thought with pleasure of dancing a great deal with Mr. Wickham" (*Pride and Prejudice* 219). He reveals himself to her as the victim of Mr. Darcy's ill will, tainting her image of the man, to the point that she refuses to have patience with Mr. Darcy because that would be "injury to Wickham" (*Pride and Prejudice* 220). It is especially in this relationship that the reader is able to witness Elizabeth's faulty judgment of character. She believes all that Wickham says because "there was truth in his looks," while in reality all that Wickham tells her is a retelling of events, skewed in

his favor (*Pride and Prejudice* 219). The first indication of Wickham's true nature comes at his relinquishing pursuit of Elizabeth in favor for a Miss King, of whom, "the sudden acquisition of ten thousand pounds was the most remarkable charm" (*Pride and Prejudice* 248). Elizabeth's aunt rightly points out that there might be something mercenary in his attentions and Lizzy herself admits that, "her heart had been but slightly touched, and her vanity was satisfied with believing that *she* would have been his only choice, had fortune permitted it" (*Pride and Prejudice* 248). However, as Darcy reveals later, and Wickham demonstrates himself through his actions by Lydia, by resisting the temptation of such an imprudent match, Lizzy escapes a terrible fate. Furthermore, her experiences in overcoming her feelings for Wickham coupled with her knowledge of his true nature, instead of hindering her suit with Mr. Darcy, aid her in her pursuit of her own *kleos*.

The final distinct similarity between Odysseus and Elizabeth as heroes relates to their growth in knowledge about themselves during physical journeys. As pointed out by Fraiman, the classical developmental path of the hero always involves travel (6). While in the case of Odysseus, this assertion is harder to nail down as his entire narrative is a series of travels, I will focus on one aspect of his journey in particular that stems his growth in helping him to learn his identity—his trip to Phaeacia, the place where "he's fated to escape his noose of pain" (*Odyssey* 5.317-8). Phaeacia represents an ideal society, which Finley associates with "Utopianism," in which King Alcinous is "wise" and "generous," and Queen Arete is honored "as no woman is honored on this earth, of all the wives / now keeping households under their husband's sway" (Finley 105, *Odyssey* 6.14, 6.20, 7.78-9). The Phaeacians are prized for their excellence in sailing and athletics and it is during these games that Odysseus experiences revitalization. Before he reveals his identity, he is asked to participate in the games and, upon refusal, is

taunted. After this insult, Odysseus "leaped up, seized a weight greater than any the young men had cast, and, without removing his garment, threw it far beyond their best mark" (Finley 69). In this action, he, as well as the Phaeacians, recognizes his heroic nature, which due to his great sorrows has fallen unused. He no longer is able to sit by as an unnamed stranger, but must own his true identity. It is at this point that Odysseus recognizes himself, revealing, "Now let me begin by telling you my name… / …I am Odysseus, son of Laertes, known to the world / for every kind of craft—my fame has reached the skies" (*Odyssey* 9.17-22). After this revelation, Odysseus begins his tale, having been reminded of his own greatness, and has found his pathway home, through the aid of the Phaeacians. This journey is crucial to Odysseus' return home and his procurement of *kleos*.

Just as Odysseus learns more about himself through his journey to Phaeacia, Elizabeth's defining moment of growth in maturity of feeling comes in her visit to Derbyshire. This visit occurs some time after the first proposal of Mr. Darcy, and by this point, her feelings regarding the gentleman are much changed. However, it is during this journey that she realizes to what extent this change of feeling has taken place inside of her. Detailing Elizabeth's first sight of Mr. Darcy's estate at Pemberley, Austen writes, "Elizabeth was delighted. She had never seen a place for which nature had done more, or where natural beauty had been so little counteracted by an awkward taste…and at that moment she felt that to be mistress of Pemberley might be something!" (*Pride and Prejudice* 291). She returns time and time again to the idea that she might have been mistress of this fine estate and even experiences "something very like regret" (*Pride and Prejudice* 291). This regret is furthered by her conversation with Mr. Darcy's maid who reveals that "he is the best landlord, and the best master…that ever lived," as well as the best of brothers, and that when it comes to marriage, she does "not know who is good enough for

him" (*Pride and Prejudice* 293, 292). Upon this new information Elizabeth exclaims, "In what an amiable light does this place him!" (*Pride and Prejudice* 293). Her prior opinions of the gentleman, who will eventually lead her to her gaining of *kleos*, are overturned entirely during this journey. This discovery is cemented by the actions of Mr. Darcy himself, during the course of her visit. Upon their meeting, Elizabeth muses, "And his behaviour, so strikingly altered—what could it mean? That he should even speak to her was amazing!—but to speak with such civility, to inquire after her family…She longed to know what at that moment was passing in his mind—in what manner he thought of her, and whether, in defiance of everything, she was still dear to him" (*Pride and Prejudice* 294). No longer does she look at his attentions as unfavorable; on the contrary, because of the behavior that he exhibits during this trip, she begins to wish the return of them as she ponders, that it is in her power "which her fancy told her she still possessed, of bringing on her the renewal of his addresses" (*Pride and Prejudice* 300). This journey is instrumental in her eventual success as a heroine and it is in this moment that she recognizes her feelings for Mr. Darcy for what they really are—love. After their attachment is recognized publicly, Lizzy writes to her Aunt Gardiner, who took her on the trip, saying, "I thank you, again and again, for not going to the Lakes. How could I be so silly as to wish it!" (*Pride and Prejudice* 357). If they had journeyed to the Lakes instead of Derbyshire, as they had intended, Elizabeth acknowledges herself that her story might have had a different outcome, being a life without Mr. Darcy.

Thematic Similarities between Austen and Epic

Perhaps the most striking moment in the course of the epic hero or heroine's story is the moment of *anagnorisis*, which the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines as the moment of

"recognition." A hero's *anagnorisis* is the crucial moment in which they, or others, recognize their true identities and feelings. This moment is universal in epic and both of Austen's heroines experience their own recognitions, lending to the reading of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma* as female epics. Achilles experiences this moment in the visit of Priam, Emma in the aftermath of Box Hill, Elizabeth in the letter she receives from Mr. Darcy, and Odysseus—the most complex—experiences several *anagnorises* over the course of his journey, continually having to earn the recognition of those around him.

Prior to his anagnorisis, Achilles is characterized as falling into a savage nature. The crowning moment of this degradation is the moment in which Achilles abuses Hector's dead body. The death of Hector, for Achilles, should have been a moment that brought him the greatest glory. However, it is tainted by his disregard for Greek custom and his disrespect of the body of Hector. Before he is killed by Achilles, Hector presents himself to Achilles as a suppliant. As such, Achilles ought to have shown mercy to Hector after his death and honored Hector's wishes. He implores Achilles not to "allow the dogs to mutilate my body / By the Greek ships. Accept the gold and bronze / Ransom my father and mother will give you / And send my body back home to be burned / in honor" (*Iliad* 22.377-81). Instead of fulfilling the law of suppliants, Achilles disregards Hector's pleas and treats him with brutality. Homer describes the mutilation of Hector's body proclaiming, "it was shame and defilement Achilles / Had in mind for Hector. He pierced the tendons / Above the heels and cinched them with leather thongs / To his chariot, letting Hector's head drag" (*Iliad* 22.438-41). Bowra acknowledges that "Achilles has now become the victim of '"ate"', the infatuation that leads to disaster…It is all the worse because the divine ordinance which Achilles now violates is one of the most sacred, the law that mercy must be shown to suppliants" (8). If the story had ended here, Achilles would not

be the epic hero. As Finley suggests, "Homer could not close the tale with the death of Hector at the hand of Achilles for that would have left us with the too angry man, not with Achilles the redeemed hero" (126). Indeed, the Achilles that we see is a hero that "has sunk to degradation through a fault in his own character, and he can be restored to honour and sympathy when this fault is healed" (Bowra 8). This moment of healing comes with the anagnorisis of Achilles, when Priam comes to the camp of the Greeks to ransom the body of Hector. Priam, in his desperation to recover the body of his fallen son, appeals to Achilles' sense of duty, begging, "Respect the gods, Achilles / Think of your own father, and pity me. / I am more pitiable" (*Iliad* 24.539-41). This entreaty finally brings Achilles to see the fault of his ways and he responds, "Ah, the suffering you've had, and the courage. / To come here alone to the Greek ships / …Let our pain / Lie rest a while, no matter how much we hurt" (*Iliad* 24.557-62). In this moment, Achilles is able to release his great anger, granting Priam the body of Hector, and it is "in this act that he recovers his true nature" (Bowra 8). He "recognizes that he is a part of the community of human suffering" and learns pity for others, finally able to look outside of himself and his selfish anger (Toohey 42). In accordance with this newfound recognition, Achilles grants Priam his request that the Trojans be given twelve days to mourn and bury Hector, saying, "You will have your armistice" (*Iliad* 24.719). Through his *anagnorisis*, Achilles is finally able to reconcile himself with the world around him and he is taught the compassion necessary in the epic hero.

Emma's *anagnorisis*, too, comes at the expense of harm to others, holding in line with the similarities of Emma to Achilles as a hero. They both abuse their positions of power to harm others; albeit, Achilles harms Hector physically, and Emma harms Miss Bates emotionally. Emma's moment of *anagnorisis* occurs in the aftermath of the party that is held at Box Hill. Frank Churchill demands that, in order to suit Emma's pleasure, everyone must tell her what

they are thinking of, with the choices of "one thing very clever…two things moderately clever…or three things very dull indeed" (*Emma* 758). Miss Bates, who is known for her constant chatter responds, "Oh! Very well…then I need not be uneasy. 'Three things very dull indeed.' That will just do for me…I shall be sure to say three dull things as soon as ever I open my mouth" (*Emma* 758). Butler illustrates Emma's feelings in this moment with "nervous, uneasy, and yet intoxicated with vanity, she rides the inspiration of the moment and is clever at the expense of Miss Bates" (256-7). Exalting in her cleverness, Emma returns, "Ah! Ma'am, but there may be a difficulty. Pardon me—but you will be limited as to number—only three at once" (*Emma* 758). Miss Bates is visibly hurt by this outburst and Mr. Knightley chastens Emma vigorously for her poor treatment of their unfortunate friend. What makes Mr. Knightley most upset is that Miss Bates' situation should evoke Emma's compassion, not her judgment. He censures, "It was badly done, indeed! You, whom she had known from an infant, whom she had seen grow up from a period when her notice was an honour, to have you now, in thoughtless spirits, and the pride of the moment, laugh at her, humble her…and before others" (*Emma* 760-1). He points out that Emma sets the example for others in her community and by making fun of Miss Bates, she gives others such an example. Ending, Mr. Knightley hopes that in the future Emma will "do me greater justice than you can do now" (*Emma* 761). Receiving so sharp a censure from Mr. Knightley, whose opinion matters more to her than any other, Emma is forced to reflect on her own selfish actions up until this point. She reflects, "She had been often remiss, her conscious told her so…scornful, ungracious. But it should be so no more" (*Emma* 761). She laments her own behavior saying, "Never had she felt so agitated, mortified, grieved, at any circumstance in her life…The truth of this representation there was no denying. She felt it at her heart. How could she have been so brutal, so cruel to Miss Bates! How could she have exposed

herself to such ill opinion in any one she valued!" (*Emma* 761). Soon after this event, with her new outlook on life, Emma is able to see the reality of how things stand in the world around her because she is able to look outside of herself. As Butler illustrates, "The aftermath of the crisis at Box Hill, Emma's discovery that Frank and Jane are engaged, and that she loves Mr. Knightley, brings her back to the directness and truth she is capable of when her judgment is clear" (257). It is only after she fears losing Mr. Knightley's good opinion that she is able to see just how much he means to her. This realization is furthered by Harriet's own confession of affection for Mr. Knightley. At this thought, in another moment of *anagnorisis*, Emma realizes, "It darted through her, with the speed of an arrow, that Mr. Knightley must marry no one but herself!...She saw it all with a clearness which had never blessed her before. How improperly had she been acting by Harriet! How inconsiderate, how indelicate, how irrational, how unfeeling had been her conduct! What blindness, what madness had led her on!" (*Emma* 776). This second moment of recognition is a direct result of the clarity afforded her mind after her first *anagnorisis*. Through this knowledge, Emma is able to pursue a glorified ending, in matrimony with Mr. Knightley.

Odysseus' situation is singular in that, instead of going through one major moment of *anagnorisis*, he undergoes several as he has to earn the recognition of all in Ithaca, in order to return to his old life. At the start of the narrative, Homer sings, "Sing to me of the man, Muse, the man of twists and turns" (*Odyssey* 1.1). It is important to note that he does not name Odysseus, only referring to him as a "man." He cannot earn his identity of Odysseus the hero until he is recognized as such by others. His first *anagnorisis*, as discussed earlier, occurs when he reveals his identity to the Phaeacians. However, this recognition is not as important as the rest for it does not lend him recognition to his family. In the series of *anagnorises* that occur on

Ithaca, the first takes place between Odysseus and his son Telemachus. Athena alerts Odysseus that "now is the time to tell your son the truth. / Hold nothing back" (*Odyssey* 16.189-90). Immediately, Odysseus is transfigured into his heroic form, Telemachus acknowledging that he is "a new man" (*Odyssey* 16.204). He reveals his identity to Telemachus but bids him "Let no one hear that Odysseus has come home. / Don't let Laertes know… / none in the household, not Penelope herself" (*Odyssey* 16.334-6). It is so important that all recognize Odysseus that even Argos, Odysseus' old hunting dog, gets his moment of *anagnorisis* (*Odyssey* 17.329-60). The next person to recognize Odysseus is Eurycleia, the woman who nursed Odysseus as a child. The old servant is ordered to give Odysseus, who is under the guise of a beggar, a bath and Odysseus realizes too late that his old nurse might recognize him. Homer writes, "Soon as she touched him she might spot the scar! / The truth would all come out. Bending closer / she started to bathe her master…then, in a flash, she knew the scar" (*Odyssey* 19.443-5). She names him but she too is bid to keep his secret from his wife. By far the most important *anagnorisis* in the poem is that between Penelope and Odysseus. On being told that her husband is home, Penelope is skeptical. Always cunning, she devises a test for Odysseus stating, "If he is truly / Odysseus, home at last, make no mistake: / we two will know each other, even better— / we two have secret signs, / known to us both but hidden from the world" (*Odyssey* 23.121-5). Penelope, seeking proof of Odysseus' identity, then proceeds to ask Eurycleia to remove the bedstead out of the bridal chamber. However, Odysseus, having made the bedstead himself becomes furious. He cries, "Woman—your words, they cut me to the core! / Who could move my bed? Impossible task, / …Not a man on earth, not even at peak strength / would find it easy to prise it up and shift it" (*Odyssey* 23.205-11). Penelope is now convinced of Odysseus' identity and the *anagnorisis* is complete. The occasion is detailed, "Living proof— / Penelope felt her knees go

slack, her heart surrender, / recognizing the strong clear signs Odysseus offered" (*Odyssey* 23.230-2). The final *anagnorisis* occurs between Odysseus and his father Laertes. Once he reveals himself, his father asks for proof, to which Odysseus responds with a story about the trees that his father gave him as a little boy. Laertes is convinced, and in the words of *anagnorisis*, "Living proof—and Leartes' knees went slack, his heart surrendered, / recognizing the strong clear signs Odysseus offered" (Odyssey 24.384-5). While he starts off only as a man, he ends as the fully recognized hero. Odysseus' *anagnorises* are now complete and he can fully enjoy the *kleos* that is associated with his name, and glory in being home.

Elizabeth's *anagnorisis* occurs after she reflects on the letter that she receives from Mr. Darcy after his first proposal, which alters her view of the world around her and allows her to become fully aware of how she truly feels. As Fraiman points out, the letter is "the point…on which..the whole book turns" (78). The letter addresses the two major reasons which Elizabeth gives for not accepting Mr. Darcy's proposal. These two reasons are Mr. Darcy's art in separating her sister from Mr. Bingley in order to prevent their match, as well as Mr. Darcy's despicable treatment of Mr. Wickham. His reason given for getting in the way of the match were that he believed her sister "to be indifferent" to the attentions of Mr. Bingley (*Pride and Prejudice* 270). Furthermore he points out to Elizabeth that, "the situation of your mother's family, though objectionable, was nothing in comparison to that total want of propriety so frequently, so almost uniformly betrayed by herself, by your three younger sisters, and occasionally even by your father" (*Pride and Prejudice* 270). In regards to Wickham, he reveals the true nature of the situation regarding their connection. In essence, Mr. Darcy never wronged Mr. Wickham, instead, treating him more liberally than he deserved, being that he almost caused the ruination of Mr. Darcy's younger sister Georgiana (*Pride and Prejudice* 272-3). Upon first

reading the letter, Elizabeth read "with a strong prejudice against everything he might say" calling it "all pride and insolence" (*Pride and Prejudice* 274). However, as she further reflected on the contents of the letter, her feelings began to change. She remarks that Darcy's "countenance, voice, and manner had established him at once in the possession of every virtue" (*Pride and Prejudice* 274). Furthermore, on recalling Wickham's person, she is unable to think of one instance of his actual goodness, realizing only a great deal of impropriety in his actions. In later expressing the differences in their characters to Jane, Elizabeth surmises, "One has got all the goodness, and the other all the appearance of it" (*Pride and Prejudice* 283). She also recognizes the truth in what Darcy says about Jane's reserve and her family's crude behavior in public. After all of these realizations, Lizzy "grew absolutely ashamed of herself. Of neither Darcy nor Wickham could she think without feeling she had been blind, partial, prejudiced, absurd" (*Pride and Prejudice* 275). The *anagnorisis* "follows the heroine's discovery of her mistake" (Butler 166). She laments, "How despicably I have acted! . . .I who have prided myself on my discernment! I, who have valued myself on my abilities! . . .How humiliating is this discovery! . . .Till this moment I never knew myself" (*Pride and Prejudice* 275-6). As Butler points out, "Elizabeth…has no inkling of her own fallibility until Darcy's proposal and the explanatory letter which follows it. The confrontation between these two central characters naturally brings about mutual illumination, not because one has opposite qualities which the other must learn to adopt, but because each discovers the other to be worthy of respect" (207-8). Elizabeth's *anagnorisis* allows her to recognize just how faulty she has been in her judgment, as well as giving her the respect for Mr. Darcy that will later turn into the love which will be her crowning glory.

Continuing with overarching themes between Homer's epics and the novels of Jane Austen, in each hero and heroine's life the relationship between the hero and his or her father is stressed as binding and, in some ways, the most important in their formation as epic heroes. In the case of Achilles, his father is the reason he becomes a hero, but also the reason he longs for home. Achilles' laments his separation from his father, Peleus, because "home means for him his father—but his father sent him out to be a warrior…Achilles cannot disappoint his father's expectations of him" (Redfield 17). Furthermore, as demonstrated in Achilles' *anagnorisis*, it is by bringing up Achilles' relationship with his own father that Priam succeeds in winning back Hector's body. Priam implores, "Remember your father, godlike Achilles. / He and I both are on the doorstep of old age" (*Iliad* 24.520-2). In this way, Priam identifies himself with Peleus and Achilles himself is drawn to make the connection. By doing so, "Achilles begins to assume the role not just of Priam's host but of his son, Hector" (Toohey 42). The pain he feels at considering how his own father will feel upon his own death brings the great Achilles to tears. Achilles' love for Peleus is what causes the change in his heart and allows him to give up his wrath.

In the case of Emma, she, being the mistress of the house, is charged with the care of her father which allows for a special, inseparable bond between the two. She cares for him so much that her chief concern after she realizes how poorly she has acted is that "as a daughter, she hoped she was not without a heart" (*Emma* 761). This relationship is the only one that she knows she is good at and is the only one she relies on performing well. Upon the thought of potentially getting married someday, Emma muses that "never, never could I expect to be so truly beloved and important; so always first and always right in any man's eyes as I am in my father's" (*Emma* 626). She is adored by her father and in her current situation at Hartfield, she

longs for no other security. Even when she is faced with the fact that she loves Mr. Knightley, she refuses to betray the trust of her father who relies upon her in every matter and who could not part with her without exceptional pain to both parties. She thinks marriage "would be incompatible with what she owed to her father, and with what she felt for him. Nothing should separate her from her father" (*Emma* 779). However, as Mr. Knightley has such perfect understanding of their relationship, he comes up with a solution to suit everyone by agreeing to move into Hartfield with Emma and her father after their marriage. Emma's relationship with her father is so important to her character as a heroine that even the ties of marriage cannot destroy it.

The significance of Odysseus' relationship with his father is demonstrated by the fact that in his series of recognitions, his father's is the last. As Finley demonstrates, "much of the final book of the poem is given over to a scene of love and devotion between father and son" (89). Odysseus derives his heroic nature from his father and thus, it is important to demonstrate the relationship between to the two. On arriving at the farm on which Laertes is working, Odysseus sees the toll that his struggles have taken on the appearance of his father. Laertes is described as "clad in filthy rags, / in a patched, unseemly shirt… / to cultivate his misery that much more" (*Odyssey* 24.250-6). He is "a man worn down with years, his heart racked with sorrow" (*Odyssey* 24.258). Like Achilles, Odysseus is moved to tears considering the pain that his father has been through in thinking that he has lost his son. The old man is so worn-down that he has trouble recollecting Odysseus saying, "there was a son, or was he all a dream?" (*Odyssey* 24.322). Odysseus begins to test his father but, upon seeing the enormity of his grief, gives up and reveals himself as his son. After they are reunited, Laertes' appearance marks the difference. Athena aids him, "fleshing out the limbs / of the old commander, made him taller to the eyes, /

his build more massive" (*Odyssey* 24.408-10). Laertes', by having his son restored to him, appears to be the strong king that he is. Both men affirm and better each other, as "father and son confirmed each other's spirits" (*Odyssey* 24.425).

Elizabeth Bennet has the distinction of being the favorite of her father's five daughters. Her ready wit is a direct product of her father's interactions with her, as "she is quite as much the product of her father's influence as Darcy was of his" (Butler 210). Due to her quick wit, Elizabeth is "encouraged by her father's example to take delight in the follies and vanities of others" (Butler 206). While Mr. Bennet exercises this preference "to ridicule and disappoint his wife, he uses it in an opposite fashion to praise, protect, and…enable his daughter" (Fraiman 71). It is pointed out within the novel that while Lizzy is her father's favorite, she is farthest from this distinction when it comes to her mother. Lizzy, "by giving up the mother and giving in to the father…reaps the spoils of maleness" (Fraiman 71). In this manner, Elizabeth receives her agency as a heroine from her father. He sides with Elizabeth's judgment in all matters, having crafted her intellect himself. Due to this preference, Elizabeth loves her father dearly. When her Aunt Gardiner beseeches her not to pursue a relationship with Wickham, she appeals to her saying, "You have sense, and we all expect you to use it. Your father would depend on *your* resolution and good conduct, I am sure. You must not disappoint your father" (*Pride and Prejudice* 245). Lizzy responds, "My father's opinion of me does me the greatest honour, and I should be miserable to forfeit it" (*Pride and Prejudice* 246). Like Emma, her concern for her father's opinion once she decides on marriage is evident. She relays, "She did not fear her father's opposition, but he was going to be made unhappy; and that it should be through her means—that she, his favourite child, should be filling him with fears and regrets in disposing of her—was a wretched reflection" (*Pride and Prejudice* 354). Despite her worries, she satisfies

her father's queries on the matter, granting the praise, "If this is the case, he deserves you. I could not have parted with you, my Lizzy, to anyone less worthy" (*Pride and Prejudice* 354). Her relationship with her father is the foundation for her intellectual character as a heroine and as such, his approval allows her to rejoice fully in her match.

While great glory comes with the achievement of *kleos*, a price has to be paid in order to reach its attainment. Sadly, "The epic…hero is the hero who, by his very nature, must perish" (Bakhtin 36). An epic hero has to choose "between long life and "imperishable kleos"; he cannot have both (Redfield 34). They gain everlasting glory in the end but it is impossible to enjoy such a distinction in an immediate nature due to the fact that they have forfeited their own lives. In the case of Jane Austen, these heroines must also experience a sort of "death." Instead of literally giving up their lives to achieve their *kleos*, by marriage Austen's heroine's experience the death of their autonomous and free-thinking selves. Fraiman discusses this theory, calling it the "humiliation" of Elizabeth Bennet (63). She points out that Elizabeth "sets out with a surplus of intellectual confidence and authority which, in the course of the novel, she must largely relinquish" (Fraiman 63). However, despite this fact, it remains that Elizabeth does make "a glorious match, the most glorious of any Austen heroine" (Butler 214). It is a glorious match both monetarily speaking and for the sake of the fact that she is able to marry the man that she loves. Emma, too, in agreeing to marry Mr. Knightley relinquishes her independence as the leader of her own household. However, "when she marries Mr. Knightley, her rank will be secured" as the foremost woman in the neighborhood, for while she was single, she was still superseded by Mrs. Elton (Butler 273).

It is by this death that the epic hero is able to reconcile his or herself to society. Bakhtin details that "outside his destiny, the epic…hero is nothing; he is, therefore, a function of the plot

fate assigns him" (36). The epic hero cannot escape his fate to die and if he does not die, he is nothing. The epic heroine, likewise, cannot escape her fate to marry. If she does not, she is nothing. In Elizabeth's case, she has no monetary security and in Emma's case, she lacks distinction amongst her peers. As Redfield states, "The kleos of the hero is to some extent a compensation to him for his own destruction" (34). While they have paid the price for *kleos*, they are happy in their sacrifices. They have achieved their desired goals, and in exceptional fashion. This is what makes them epic.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates the ability of Jane Austen's texts, specifically *Pride and Prejudice* and *Emma*, to function as female epics—paralleling specific character traits of epic heroes, thematic devices employed in epic, as well as, most importantly, demonstrating the achievement of *kleos* within the feminine sphere through marriage. While Austen's heroines are not able to exert their masculine character aspects in the male sphere, they are able to overcome their femininity to a certain extent and apply their heroism to the feminine sphere which confines their actions. Their glory is no less great than those of the epic heroes; rather, the importance of glory on the battlefield is transformed to glory within the boundaries of the home. Just as Achilles and Odysseus are exemplary epic heroes due to their successes in battle, Elizabeth and Emma are exemplary epic heroes due to their successes in marriage.

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